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Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI)

SUCCESS STORY

Afghan Journalists Look Beyond Headlines

CCI funded the Kandahar Press Club to empower young journalists to contribute to fair and unbiased investigative reporting, when pursuing political, civil and commercial news leads.



Photo: USAID/CCI

Male and female journalists attend training lectures before perusing practical field work.

“Journalists here report only day-to-day incidents with no real academic skills, so their capability is limited to basic reporting... Training journalists in Kandahar to properly investigate and analyze facts is a very effective and useful way to tell the complete story.”

- Trainee and Kandahar social media blogger

May 2014 – Since 2002, Afghan media has experienced exponential growth. However, similar growth in the number of GIRoA and Taliban media campaigns requires civil society, international organizations and journalists to apply greater analytical skills to reporting and information gathering at both national and provincial levels. In Kandahar Province, journalism styles vary from verbatim reporting of press releases, to sensational interpretations of events. Many journalists and news consumers realize accurate reporting often lies somewhere in the middle.

In Kandahar City, few news outlets provide quality investigative journalism or understand the obligation GIRoA has, or should have, towards media and civil society. The Kandahar Press Club represents an important outlet and source of information on best practice for Kandahar's journalists. Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) funded the Kandahar Press Club to further invest in its membership, through training with a specific focus upon investigative journalism to improve the quality of Kandahar City's media, and further advance public understanding of current events and the role of GIRoA. Assistant Chairman of the Kandahar Press Club and reporter for Radio Free Europe, Bashir Ahmad Sali said, “Our journalists in Kandahar broadcast basic reports and have almost no familiarity with investigative journalism. As Kandahar University launched the new journalism faculty only last year, I believe providing this training will be an excellent way to enhance overall investigative reporting skills.”

Including two young women, a total of eighteen journalists attended sessions on journalism ethics and standards, interviewing techniques, research tools development and learning different methods of analytical reporting. The trainees then visited local government offices in the District Center to witness GIRoA officials interacting with their constituents. These exercises encouraged trainees to observe and record such interactions, and apply newly acquired journalism skills to prepare and present their individual findings back to their class and tutors.

Well-trained investigative journalists have the potential to further transform Afghanistan's dynamic media landscape, and meaningfully contribute to expanding international news demands. Kandahar Press Club's Bashir Ahmad Sali continued, “If International media, such as CNN or New York Times want to develop probing reports, they normally bring journalists from Kabul or outside Afghanistan to prepare the investigative research. Topics such as local political corruption or drug trafficking are all investigative issues that should and can be done in Kandahar, if investigative journalism capacity is increased.” Radio Television Afghanistan, Tolo TV and Radio Killid attended the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, covering the events. The Press Club has been lobbying media organizations to consider the trainees for future employment.